

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

July 12, 2013

Sally Jewell
Secretary of the Interior
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

Tom Vilsack
Secretary of Agriculture
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Jewell and Secretary Vilsack:

We are writing to invite you to our state to learn about Colorado's successful efforts to preserve and protect the Gunnison sage grouse. We believe the collaborative and voluntary process our state has undertaken could be used as a model to protect other threatened species within Colorado and across the country.

In response to the proposed listing of the Gunnison sage grouse, stakeholders in Colorado worked to implement strong and binding voluntary conservation measures throughout the bird's local habitat. Local governments and private landowners used a variety of tools to protect the species, including: the implementation of protective land use policies, conservation easements on private land, Conservation Agreements With Assurances and private property acquisitions. These efforts and others have led to the expenditure of over \$30 million in public and private funds, all with the goal of preserving the species. Thanks to these initiatives we've made great progress – U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) data now show the population of Gunnison sage grouse has increased in the Gunnison Basin.

In addition to the work outlined above, eleven counties in southwest Colorado and southeast Utah have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) summarizing joint measures they will take to protect the Gunnison sage grouse within their borders. This MOU has led to a recently-finalized conservation agreement with the State of Colorado. We are hopeful that your agencies will join in these good faith efforts to initiate proactive conservation and habitat protection measures and perhaps endorse this landmark agreement. The coalition members believe these measures will ultimately achieve or exceed the species protection goals of a possible Endangered Species Act (ESA) listing. While great progress has been made, there is significant potential to illustrate even greater preservation and – given that USFWS has expressed support for locally-led conservation initiatives in the past – we would request that you grant a six month extension before making a final decision regarding whether to list the species under the ESA.

We know the Administration has many factors to weigh when considering listing a species under the Act. We know you are diligently moving through this process for the Gunnison sage grouse

and believe your deliberations will benefit from witnessing firsthand the impressive work that has occurred in our home state of Colorado.

Thank you for your continued efforts on this matter and your consideration of these requests. We look forward to hearing from you.


Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Michael F. Bennet", written in a cursive style.

Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Mark Udall", written in a cursive style.

Mark Udall
United States Senator

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Scott R. Tipton", written in a cursive style.

Scott Tipton
United States Representative